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# Boniface VIII

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Boniface VIII

By

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Boniface VIII pope from 1294 till 1303 marked the change of papal power from that point on. He was born in 1235 and elected pope 1294 after advising Celestine V to resign. Boniface VIII used his last years to change the role of the papacy forever. Through his battle with Philip IV of France, Boniface issued documents that in the end motivated the secular powers to overcome their fear of the church and confront the Pope with no regards to his spiritual authority. The political power of the pope was never again to be the same. In the middle ages the conflict between secular and spiritual rulers often arose leading to conflict. Usually these were derived from power struggles between the spiritual and temporal leaders. Pope Boniface VIII marks the end of this problem creating a pivotal point in history. I am researching to what extent Boniface VIII was at fault in regards to the loss of political power from 1294 till his 1303. The rise of educated men and strong secular rulers caused the loss of political power during the papacy of Boniface VIII. The political power would never be the same after the election of Boniface VIII.

### **Historiography**

Most works written on Boniface VIII have a bias stance on either the side of the church or opposing the church. This stance dates back to his rule with the divided opinion of pope Boniface VIII. The two main views argue over the purpose behind the political moves of church and state. T. R. S. Boase (1933) offers one of the few neutral stances of Boniface VIII. Boase looks at all sides of the pope's life, from political to family. This book offers a close look at the events that surrounded Boniface VIII and the conflict between Philip the Fair and the Church. Boase does tend to show admiration for

Boniface VIII by supporting reasons for his difficult situations. Boase discusses in most detail the separation of Cardinals after Boniface is elected. This separation of the church shows some of the difficulties that Boniface had to face.<sup>1</sup>

R. W. Southern (1970) covers a more broad scope of time and people during the Middle Ages. While he focuses on the church he covers all the bishops and how the church was unfolding through out the different empires. Southern covers different religious orders focusing on Franciscans, Carmelites, Dominicans, and Augustinians, branches of Christianity that eventually Boniface in his latter years wanted tied back into the single folds of one unified church. This becomes important when understanding reasons why Boniface wanted Celestine V to resign and latter when he writes the *Unam sanctam*. The different orders were often created to battle heresy and a desire to return to the basics of church.<sup>2</sup>

A. C. Flick (1930) offers another look at Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair. His work points out the importance of Philip's assault on the church. Flick's works discusses the reasons for the rise of the church in power which created the struggle between secular and spiritual. Flick centers on how the church gained its power and around its political aspirations. Flick states that Boniface VIII forced upon the secular ruler the choice to compromise or challenge him. This bold use of power was hindered by the new

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<sup>1</sup> Boase, T. Boniface VIII (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959).

<sup>2</sup> R. W. Southern Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Grand Rapids, Mi: Erdmans 1970).



development of educated men. The church was not prepared for this new atmosphere causing stronger retaliations from the secular rulers.<sup>3</sup>

Philip Hughes (1947), a historian of the church provides an argument in favor of Boniface's stance. This source shows the rise of power in the papacy mainly focusing on the year of the Jubilee (1300). Hughes uses letters that contain propaganda between the major powers. Such letters as *Ineffabilis Amoris* (1296) and *Recordare Rex Inclyte* (July 18, 1300). Hughes points out the controversy that arose due to the arrest of the Bishop of Pamiers by Philip. More importantly Hughes addresses the inter-workings of the Colonna and Philip of France before Boniface was elected pope. This friendship was to become a real problem during his later years as pope as they build up the case of non-legitimacy against him.<sup>4</sup>

Jean Leclercq's (1939) writings discuss Boniface VIII's encouragement of Celestine V to resign (1939, p.43). After being elected his first bull justifies his accession. Leclercq establishes the challenges for Boniface as; overcoming loyalty still held by Celestine V, Celestine V production of miracles, and Celestine attempt to escape papal power. Orders like the Franciscan owed to Celestine V their independence creating yet another challenge. Leclercq spends the remaining pages discussing the

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<sup>3</sup> A.C. Flick "The New Challenge to Medieval Papalism," In *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII state v. papacy* edited by Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1967).

<sup>4</sup> Philip Hughes "The Papal Jubilee and the Renewal of Hostilities," In *Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII state v. papacy* edited by Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and

debate of legitimacy as interpreted by lawyers of the time. In the end it is settled that he was the legitimate pope.<sup>5</sup>

Charles-Victor Langlois (1902) gives a deeper look at the politics of King Philip IV. He looks at the diplomatic ties between Philip and the Colonna. These ties are then used to explain Boniface actions. Langlois focus on the letters from William of Nogaret. According to Langlois, other letters are not as reliable because they were not written by Philip or his sons. William of Nogaret was not a son of Philips but a councilor. The end results show Philip as a King of impressionable character who allowed for others to lead for him once they had gained his trust.<sup>6</sup>

These authors support my underlying theme that Boniface was a victim of time, specifically those mentioned in my thesis, making it an inevitable transition. The only author who stands apart is Langlois who blames Boniface actions rather than outside factors. These authors do bring out the controversial points but upon deeper research it is hard to blame Boniface for the end results of papal loss of political power.

## **Background**

Boniface VIII has been well studied along with the documents that have survived, but was it his fault as a pope or was the person superfluous? Most works on Boniface VIII are from the 1970's or earlier leaving the information untouched by the new age historian. Through an analysis of primary documents including the Bull *Clericis laicos*,

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<sup>5</sup> Jean Leclercq "The Legitimacy of Boniface VIII," In Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII state v. papacy edited by Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1967).

<sup>6</sup> Charles-Victor Langlois "Philip The Fair: The Unknown King," In Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII state v. papacy edited by Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and



*Auscultate filii*, and *Unam sanctum*, I will compare his stance to previous papal positions to address constancy. Then I will look at Philip the Fair and the changing society cumulating in the late middle ages to get a real understanding of how the time and place affected the papacy.

To understand how Boniface VIII was viewed by the people, we must first look at his predecessor, Celestine V. The election of Peter of Murrone as Celestine V was not one of short duration. The Conclave met for 9 months, the last time that they would be allowed to take such time. Pope Gregory X had instituted rules on the Conclave election twenty years previously at the Council of Lyons, but it was cancelled by a later pope.

Eventually in early July 1294 to end the stress they all excitedly decided to elect a hermit. Since no one could agree by electing an old nobody they hoped to have a quick turn around of papal succession. This election was to be of short duration, and in fact he was never to enter into the papal estates during his brief appointment resigning his position as pope on December 13. Being an old man who was largely or almost entirely controlled by the cardinals, he was down trodden by the workings of the papacy and therefore unable to make policy changes. The one change Celestine made was to reinstate Gregory X's election practices, to ensure a speedy election, the very cause of what had led him to being elected in the first place. Within a Month, the next pope was elected, Boniface VIII. The speculation of his role is still debated and in large I am to find justification in these speculations with his arresting Celestine V as one of his first acts as pope. The reaction from the people may not have been so strong except Peter of Murrone, had been viewed as a saintly man, similar to that of St. Francis, and viewed as a prophet. His election brought great hope to the county side through alleged miracles, an

religious tolerance. While a prominent man in his younger years he was no doubt slowed down by time, and with such support from the people stories could easily have been created.<sup>7</sup>

Celestine had tried to escape once, but was caught and taken back. The fear of what he might say if he returned to his people, about the workings of the papacy or of Boniface VIII pressure, whichever was the case made him a threat. He died in May of 1296, leaving behind more problems for the current pope than his imprisonment from a return to his people ever had. The vision of the new pope driving a nail through his head was one that would be hard for the new pope to shake. Although most likely a story fabricated, the lack of certainty makes it a curse to a reputation. Celestine was held in captivity until he died but the story lead some to view Boniface as a false pope. This lack of support may have been a spurring factor which led Philip IV of France to act so boldly latter on.<sup>8</sup>

The war between England and France starting in 1294 was starting to tax the clergy, an outrage to Boniface VIII for that is the churches source of income, which prompted the strong stance of Boniface VIII in opposition to this leading to his first bull, the *Clericis laicos* in 1296.

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<sup>7</sup> Powicke, F. M. 'Boniface VIII' in *Christian Life in the Middle Ages* (London, 1966) 50





<sup>9</sup>(Solid red are Papal estates: Striped red the papacy collects a federal tribute.)

## **The Colonna and the Orsini**

The Colonna and the Orsini are two major papal families. The Caetani family bought their way in to prestige acquiring castles. When Benedict Caetani was elected Pope Boniface he gave his lands to his brother Roffred. The Colonna questioned if money for these lands came from the church. Boniface had two nephews Francis, a cardinal already, and Peter who was to inherit duchy of Caserta. Margherita Aldobrandesca, a wealthy land owner through marriages, married Roffred III Caetani. This marriage of land to the pope's great-nephew provided for even more land ties in the Caetani family. Peter bought Torre, a small village in 1296 which created problems for the Colonna put claims in 1295. As the money was being delivered Stephen Colonna stole the money.<sup>10</sup>

Boniface claimed no allegiance to any families prior to his election but once elected the two first cardinals elected were from the Orsini family. It was not until he issued the *Clericis laicos* that Boniface understood that the Colonna were his enemies. In 1297 Boniface declared the treasure to be restored that was stolen, and their three great castles were to be given to him. This would have left the Colonna broke and powerless. In response they drafted a document.

We do not believe that you are lawful pope. All Boniface's powers must be suspended until, on account of the notorious and manifest peril from doubt and ambiguity and illegitimacy of this kind, a general council had been summoned and decided the question: they claimed that their demands were based on the findings at Paris, and on the opinion of various doctors.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Boase, 165 - 173

<sup>11</sup> Boase, 171



This is the beginning of the indictment of Boniface that would continue on till his posthumous trial. In response to this Boniface wrote a bull *In excelso throno* that declared the Colonna an evil stock. The Colonna returned the money stolen and reinstated their view of papal fraud to which latter they added his role in tricking Celestine to resign.<sup>12</sup>

Boniface demanded that they declare him as the pope. The Colonna did not show up and were eventually cut off from the church and anyone who recognized them would be excommunicated as well. On December 14, 1296 Boniface granted crusading privileges to those who took part in war against his enemies. Eventually the Colonna came to Boniface, where they had to deliver him their cities, fortresses, and towns, with no conditions. They then had to kiss his feet and declare him as true pope.<sup>13</sup> The Colonna as humiliated as they were held grudges that lasted till the end.

The next image is helpful when trying to understand how papal families worked during the middle ages. Once a family acquires wealth and a political position they use it further their family. The Caetani family and the Colonna family get into a battle over political reasons although they are supposed spiritual families. They are contending over money, land, and small towns. Boniface once challenged has to take a papal stance which helps give him the advantage.

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<sup>12</sup> Boase, 170 - 173

<sup>13</sup> Boase, 179 - 181



<sup>14</sup> (This Shows the family tree of the two fighting papal families)

<sup>14</sup> Boase, 384

## Philip the Fair

Philip the Fair was the king of France from 1285 till 1314. The only character sketch was left by William of Nogaret. It is a brown nosing passage.

“My lord the king, is of the race of the kings of France who all, since the time of King Pepin, have been religious, fervent champions of the faith, vigorous defenders of Holy Mother Church. . . . He has been, before, during, and after his marriage chaste, humble, modest in bearing and language; he never gets angry; he hates no one; he envies no one; he loves everybody. Full of grace and love, pious, merciful, always following the path of truth and justice, slander is foreign to him. Fervent in the faith, religious in his life, building churches, practicing works of piety, handsome and charming in countenance, agreeable to all, even to his enemies when they are in his presence, God brings miraculous cures to the sick through his hands.”<sup>15</sup>

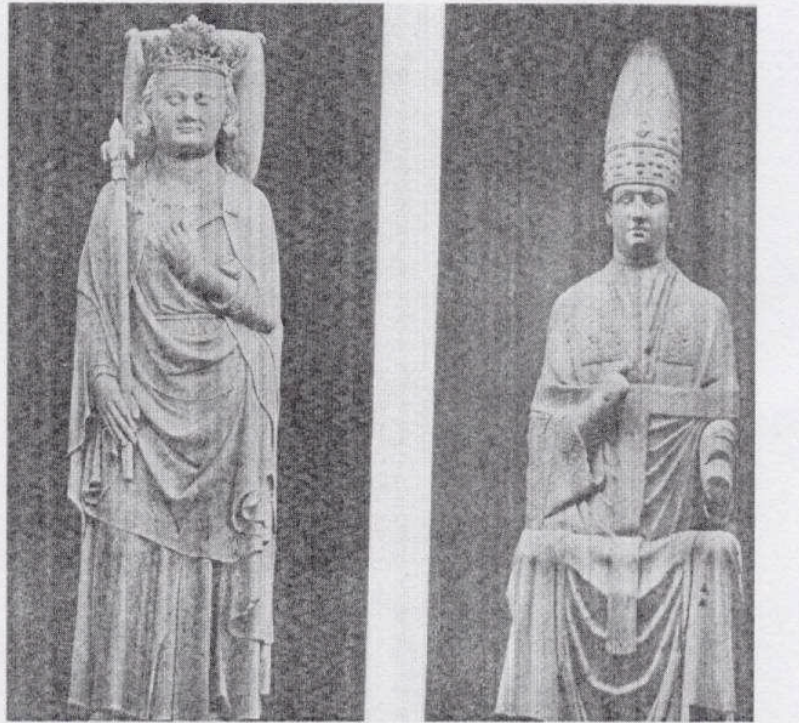
A witness at the trial of the Bishop of Pamiers, described Philip, “Our king resembles an owl, the fairest of birds but worthless. He is the handsomest man in the world, but he only knows how to look at people unblinkingly, without speaking.”<sup>16</sup> This depiction of Philip seems more accurate from his interactions with Boniface. There is little known of character but what we can derive from bias sources. We will never know to what degree his views affected the development of the conflict between himself and Boniface.

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<sup>15</sup> Langlois, 85

<sup>16</sup> Langlois, 85





<sup>17</sup> (Philip the Fair and pope Boniface VIII)

### Charles of Valois

Charles of Valois was the younger brother of Philip the Fair was a capable man. He was the claimant of Aragon, renouncing the title with the peace of Anagni in 1295. Boniface saw this and was already interested in adapting him for the papal cause. Once set up he used Charles as a papal warrior and through him his brother for funds. Still it was costly for the papacy for they paid out three times the some they got from France. Eventually Charles of Valois was established peace-maker a view that looked as an extension of the papal hand. It was in 1301 during the issue of the *Auscultate filii* that Boniface really looked for help from Charles. Boniface needed Charles to soften his

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<sup>17</sup> Geogrey Barraclough The Medieval Papacy (Harcourt: Brace & World, inc, 1968).



brother Philip while at the same time being careful not to turn Charles against him. Boniface used Charles as a tool against Philip creating in the long run more tension between church and state.<sup>18</sup>

### **Clericis laicos**

The church held four councils between 1215 with the Lateran council and 1311 with the council of Vienne. The first with Innocent III making church doctrine more difficult, and the latter with Clement V as Philip IV's puppet. The other two held at Lyons in 1245 and 1274 dealt with trying to keep the Greek and Latin churches unified. It was during this time that clergy were heavily taxed for the crusades. Under canon law secular power was forbidden to tax clergy for temporal purposes. This was usually accepted by secular rulers. So when Boniface VIII was elected it was a challenge to his authority to tax those who he relied on for his or the churches income.<sup>19</sup>

The *Clericis laicos* written in 1296 states, "The clergy, subject as they are to this hostility, shall pay no half, tenth, twentieth or other portion or quota of their revenues and goods, by any name of aid, subvention, subsidy or gift, without the express license of the Holy See; and the sanction of excommunication is laid down on all who break this decree, either in exacting or in paying such sums."<sup>20</sup> This statement leaving no room for debate received different responses from secular rulers. The King of England, Edward, asked for back taxes from when the papal seat was empty previous to Celestine V. Having incurred debt through its war with Scotland England declared the church outlaws and removed them from their protection. This received little response from the church. King Philip the Fair of France on the other hand halted goods from leaving France

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<sup>18</sup> Boase, 285 - 292

<sup>19</sup> Powicke, p 58

<sup>20</sup> Boase, 138

financially crippling the church over the course of a year. Boniface eventually issued a bull that gave the right for every author to explain ones work.<sup>21</sup>

Boniface then released Philip from excommunication with the direction to excommunicate anyone who prevented money from entering Rome. At the same time he allowed for the rulers to ask for funds through him and for periods of one year at a time. This was a major concession of papal power but did not remove the *Clericis laicos* from effect. The French bishops issued Philip a double tenth for two years. This broke the stipulations and Boniface placed him under excommunication only to have Philip demand an eighth of military tenures, a fifth from towns, and third from the clergy. The bishops were intellectually defeated by the lawyers surrounding Philip. Eventually Philip and the Colonna were moving in and Boniface conceded to Philips demands. By issuing the bull *Etsi de Statu*, Boniface allowed for the king to decide when to tax the church with out consulting the Holy See.<sup>22</sup> The Colonna, one of the two major papal families, joined Philip in an anti-Boniface stance. From the start they were on the same side till Boniface showed more attention to the other major family, the Orsini.<sup>23</sup>

## **Jubilee**

Boniface was revived in 1300 with the year of the Jubilee. Boniface declared that anyone who traveled to Rome for 15 days would be granted forgiveness of sins similar to that of going on crusades. He also issued the bull *Super cathedram*, which required a papal license if nobles and kings wanted to choose their own confessor. It addressed

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<sup>21</sup> Boase, 148 - 152

<sup>22</sup> Boase, 150 - 156

<sup>23</sup> Hughes, 24 - 27



preaching, and burial rights on top of just the confessor. This bull was aimed at hurting the Friars income while damaging their reputation. It forced friars who were performing a burial to hand over a fourth of the total to the church. Basically he granted rights in return for profits.<sup>24</sup> Boniface was at the height of his power in 1300 with an estimated 2,000,000 going to Rome, exaggerated numbers but nonetheless a portion of that is impressive. The numbers were also estimated more reasonably at a few hundred thousand. With the influx of people to Rome visiting the holy sights the church acquired some wealth once the costs of the Jubilee were subtracted.<sup>25</sup>

Boniface was suffering from an illness that was only helped by summer months at Anagni. He found a physician who could cure him. Arnald of Villanova who had run into trouble in 1299 with work that he had presented to a university. The work was declared heretical but Boniface looked passed it though noting it was a rash book. Later this tie to Arnald would be one of the few true acquisitions laid against him.<sup>26</sup>

### **The Bishop of Pamiers**

Philip the Fair had the Bishop of Pamiers arrested in the summer of 1301. The charges were serious but of little importance. The main issue lied in the bishop being tried by the king. It was a public display of state versus church. The trial was not till October 1301, in which time Archbishop of Rheims made a formal protest. This protest meant more from a French clergy member because it showed support in France to the

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<sup>24</sup> Boase, 189 - 200

<sup>25</sup> Hughes, 53 - 59

<sup>26</sup> Boase, 278 - 281



pope. Boniface had at this point received lying letters from Flotte about the trial progress.

In December of 1301 after these letters the pope demanded the release of the Bishop of Pamiers to Rome. Boniface also suspended clerical taxation and church property from Philip. He then called for a council of the French bishops to take place in November 1302. The bishop was eventually allowed to leave with the charges left hanging. The King was invited to accompany the bishops or have a representative attend. With this was the introduction of the *Auscultate filii*.<sup>27</sup>

### **Auscultate filii**

*Auscultate filii* was a private bull delivered to Philip of France in Dec 1301. Boniface had it delivered to Philip just after the bull *Salvator mundi*, which was a reinstitution of *Clericis laicos*. The *Auscultate filii* was an indictment of Philip's policy and government. Before the list of offences it states, "Wherefore, dearest son, let none persuade you that you have not a superior and that you are not subordinate to the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for he is a fool who so thinks, and who pertinaciously affirms it is convicted as an unbeliever, and is not within the fold of the good Shepherd."<sup>28</sup> Philip is then charged with oppression of his subjects, refusal to allow spiritual sword to be used against those who injure the clergy, and other offences. Boniface goes on to advise Philip to abandon his false counselors, or the educated men who are causing him so many problems.

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<sup>27</sup> Hughes, 54 - 57

<sup>28</sup> Boase, 302

When Philip receives the bull he burns it the next day in front of his advisors. Philip then drafts a fake bull called the Deum time, in which he stresses the obnoxious points while taking out the reasoning of the bull. This draft Philip has distributed to the kingdom drawing a public outcry of the people of France. It was a commitment by the King to go to war against the papacy. Philip has sent letters to the college of the cardinals describing these forged acts. The cardinals had to choose between Philip and this document signed by the nobles and the pope. They wanted to consult the pope in Rome but were denied travel. Between becoming an enemy of France and not supporting the pope they chose becoming an enemy of France.<sup>29</sup>

Boniface who received news of the bogus bull in France responded boldly. In a speech Boniface states, "Our predecessors have deposed three kings of France, and though we do not equal our predecessors, none the less we will if need be depose of Philip, most culpable of all princes, as though he were a groom."<sup>30</sup> Boniface accused Peter Flotte, the French chancellor, of papal tampering. Flotte made it seem as though Boniface had tried to take of feudal rights. Boniface had the support of the cardinals and with that he was committed to the war against France.<sup>31</sup>

### **Unam sanctam**

The transactions between Spiritual and Secular powers shows the climate in which the *Unam Sanctam* was written. The goal of Boniface was to assert through a well written and researched statement as to why spiritual rule should dominate the two

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<sup>29</sup> Langlois, 40, 41

<sup>30</sup> Boase, 309

<sup>31</sup> Boase, 300 - 308



powers. The ironic outcome of the situation is in the end it is quite the opposite. The goal of the *Unam Sanctam* was to establish control, or authority of the church through the unity of the church. The use of popular literature to pull words from, the scripture, St Bernard, Hugh of St Victor, and Thomas Aquinas shows a legal approach to show justification.<sup>32</sup> This *Unam sanctam* itself is one of the most researched and studied documents from the Middle Ages. This is due to its lasting effects to which it had. But first we must look a few pieces of what it actually said. The famous parts are the highlights which we will briefly touch on.

This document has two main components, one which states the principles, based off of the church, and the second which says how it is to be interpreted into assigning powers. The beginning of the *Unam sanctum* (1302) starts with, "There is only one holy Catholic and apostolic church that we are bound to recognize. Outside of it there is neither salvation nor pardon for sins."<sup>33</sup> The statement that there is only one church, a common clarification made through out history. Then bull then continues "The church, being only of one body, must also, on pain of being a monster, have but one head."<sup>34</sup> The one head refers to the head of the church. "When Christ said to Peter 'Feed my sheep,' he gave to him all, not some only. When the Greeks and others claim not to be subject to Peter and his successors, by that same claim they affirm that they are not members of the flock of Christ. For there shall be one fold and one shepherd."<sup>35</sup> This adds strength to the papacy through peter and his successors. Once fear is installed that the church is the

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<sup>32</sup> Luscombe, D. 'The lex divinitatis in the Bull Unam Sanctam of Pope Boniface VIII' in C. N. L. Brooke, D. E. Luscombe, G. H. Martin and D. Owen (eds) Church and Government in the Middle Ages (Cambridge, 1976) p. 205

<sup>33</sup> Boase, 321

<sup>34</sup> Riviere, 68

<sup>35</sup> Boase, 321



only key, it proceeds to say that if Christ is the head of the church, then the pope is the continuation of it.<sup>36</sup> The most concise words explaining the church position: “Therefore in this one and only Church there is one body, one head, not two heads like a monster: to wit, Christ and the vicar of Christ, Peter and Peter’s successors.”<sup>37</sup>

The power of the church is then described by the two swords comparison: “Therefore both the spiritual and the temporal swords are in the power of the Church: but the latter must be used for the church and the former by the Church; the former by the priest, the latter by the hand of kings and knights, but at the will and sufferance of the priest.”<sup>38</sup> One sword represents the spiritual and the other the temporal. In the story where the apostles find the two swords, they learn that they have different responsibilities. One is used by the church and the other is used to serve the church. This passage was taken from St Bernard’s doctrine of the two swords. This representation of power asserts that the pope has the more powerful sword and that is the justification.<sup>39</sup>

The bull explains the judgment simply. “Therefore, if the earthly power errs, it may be judged by the spiritual power. But if the lesser spiritual power errs, it is judged by its superior; if the highest truly errs, it can be judged by God alone, not by man.”<sup>40</sup> This gives divine power to the pope for he can not be judged. His power was passed down through the son of God and therefore is uncontestable by man.

The *Unam sanctam* was a continuation of the course in which the papacy had already chosen. It was not a radical position to take, but was a response to the anti-papal

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<sup>36</sup> Boase, T. R. S. ‘The Pope’s Political Dynamite’ in C.T. Wood (ed) Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII (Huntingdon, 1976) p. 56 - 61

<sup>37</sup> Riviere, 68

<sup>38</sup> Riviere, 68

<sup>39</sup> Powicke, 54

<sup>40</sup> Riviere, 69

propaganda that Philip IV was spreading around France. This spread caused for a response from the papacy, in which it stated nothing new or drastic but neither side could afford to back down in the fight and lose face. The papacy was just coming off of a series of insignificant popes having seven popes over the course of only twelve years. The last important pope Gregory X. Benedict Caetani (Boniface) was an ambitious cardinal and papal legate during these years, which must have been aggravating for a man with a drive. It is possible that this anger at watching pope after pope achieve nothing created the ambition for him to remove pope Celestine V, especially because he was hermit. With all of these years gone by with nothing but ideas to fill his mind he was ready to take a stand for his position. The pope Boniface VIII was forced and was ready to take a stance and challenge the growing power of France, rather than letting Philip IV walk all over the papacy, which in the end is what happened anyways.<sup>41</sup>

### **Boniface Captured**

Boniface last months at Anagna were quite. In April of 1303 he issued a bull that set up a university for Rome. While it did have a center for clergy to study it did not have a center for civil law. Boniface had always during his time as pope looked upon universities positively. He removed papal jurisdiction on lectures given allowing them to decide where and when to speak. Boniface through his actions shows a love of education and in his final days also issued a bull that increased the status of the school in Avignon, the future location of the papacy. On September 6<sup>th</sup> 1303 Nogaret met with others who had grievances against Boniface.

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<sup>41</sup> Powicke, p. 59 - 61



Sciarra Colonna with a troop of horse; Rainald of Supino, whose sister Maria had been divorced by Francis Caetani; his son Robert and his brother Thomas of Morolo; Nicholas Conti, whose family had been dispossessed of Sgurgola; two of the Ceccano, relatives of the rebel John, who still lay in a papal prison; Peter Colonna of Genazzano and his son Stephen, pensioners of the court of France; Peter of Lupara and his son Orlando, Neapolitan knights, and Maximus of Trevi.<sup>42</sup>

This list of people shows two things. First how many people Boniface had angered during his time as pope, and second how much thought and organization went into the preparation of getting Boniface. On the 7<sup>th</sup> they were let in by locals with 300 horse and 1000 foot troops. With only three of the invading forces being French the bulk of the forces were local.

They wanted the Colonna reinstated, hand over all the treasure of the church to three cardinals, renounce the papacy, and remain a prisoner. It was of course refused and the battle continued. When Nogaret reached the chambers of Boniface he is dressed in papal robes. It is unknown if he was beat or not but the people then decided not to let them leave with the pope. He was in his chambers and had been refusing to eat. They left and he came up from his own dungeon. He walked amongst the streets like a common man giving speeches to the people. After asking for the restoration of papal treasure he left for Rome.<sup>43</sup>

On September 21, 1303 Boniface entered the Vatican and was surrounded by loyal Orsini. He died peacefully and when exhumed in 1605 he looked calm. It was said, "He went mad, they said, gnashed his teeth, gnawed the flesh off his hands and dashed his brains out against the wall; while all his devils howled in a great storm and darkness

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<sup>42</sup> Boase, T "Boniface VIII: A Peaceful Man at the End," In Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII state v. papacy edited by Charles T. Wood (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1967).

<sup>43</sup> Boase, 78 - 82



around him.”<sup>44</sup> This story was produced obviously to discredit the pope giving cause to the actions against him.

### **Posthumous Trial**

The trial of Boniface VIII began in 1310, seven years after his death. Boniface was accused of being involved with the resignation of Celestine V as well as his death. He is charged as living a heretic life and died mad. He did not declare himself the independence of civil power donning imperial insignia and calling himself Emperor. Boniface VIII's quote, “To lie with women or boys, is no more sin than to rub one hand against another,” was taken out of context to be used in the trial.<sup>45</sup> Eventually in 1311 the trial was done leaving Boniface VIII a lawful pope. The Colonna made sure that Celestine V became a Saint since Boniface was let off. His name is forever clouded since the charges were never denied.

The Evidence submitted by the Colonna originating from 1297, was patchy at best. First it was establishing Boniface as non-legitimate. This was followed later by his supposed role in the abdication of the papacy by Celestine, and the eventual death of Celestine. Nogaret's accusations are of sexual sins, the concubinage of the clergy, and throughout all the charges were random offences against France.<sup>46</sup> These charges do make disproving the validity of the masses easy. If the charges were more believable the outcome would be the same and a little more lasting doubt would have been instilled in historians.

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<sup>44</sup> Boase, 83

<sup>45</sup> Boase, 361

<sup>46</sup> Kegan Paul, Trench The Lives Of The Popes In The Middle Ages (London: Trubner and Co., 1932), 335 - 340

## Conclusion

The rise of educated men and strong secular rulers caused the loss of political power during the papacy of Boniface VIII. Boniface was a supporter of universities as shown not only in his bulls that increase universities but gave them rights to govern their own bodies. He had befriended a physician who helped him with his illness even though his book had been viewed by some as heretical. The educated men that hurt him were the civil lawyers that surrounded Philip and advised him on religious bulls. This created the option for Philip to challenge the bulls.

This combined with the growing development of nationality amongst the different kingdoms helped give Philip the power to control the church. France, England, Spain, Germany, and Italy were viewing themselves as separate entities. There was a development of pride which indirectly gives the king more power. Philip now had loyal subjects with advisors to help predict how they would respond.

Boniface was the key figure that lead to the end of papal secular authority or its control over secular rulers, and the eventual submission of the church to Philip IV of France. But had he not taken these stances against secular power things would not have turned out differently. It was an inevitable consequence of time and state growth. With no rise in defense of the church, the church submits its authority quietly. So yes, Boniface VIII took gamble but it was not a gamble that risked the churches position for if he does nothing it is lost as well.

Boniface reasons were in the interest of the church, which I saw no greed in his papal decisions but was surprised by the wealth found at his estates when he was



captured. His refusal to resign during his capture suggests that he believed in the papacy. The possible torture in his old age would have gotten the better of him if it were only in it for the money. With three possible days of torture and the very real prospect of death could ruin anyone with the idea that their papal position as pope would save them. The opposition was not just that of France but to that of England as well.

The *Unam sanctam* was not important in Philip's decision to capture Boniface VIII. It was through previous papal bulls and stances taken in regards to those bulls that led to Philip's choice. Boniface did have many enemies to be sure and if he had been more careful he may have escaped some of the charges during his posthumous trial but even that is uncertain. It was Philip IV who chose to react which shows the possibilities that nothing might have come of it just as easily if like the other groups he had looked passed it. Philip IV was the most likely to take action due to the educated advisors that surrounded him.

The deeper look at what truly ruined Boniface can be described by his character. He lacked restraint, and more importantly holiness. As other characteristics go they were in large good for being a pope. He appeared noble, he was decisive, a good business man slash lawyer. The problem was he made enemies with too many people, and an anti – papal party was formed. He was accused of 29 different accounts of heresy, of which some were partially true.<sup>47</sup>

“He was admired by many, feared by all, and loved by none.”<sup>48</sup> This quote from the “Christian Life in the Middle Ages” shows how Boniface was viewed by people. His temperament was his ruin, but he still in all likelihood would have made a good pope at

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<sup>47</sup> Powicke, p. 62 - 64

<sup>48</sup> Powicke, p. 66



any other time during the Middle Ages. But his enemies soon would ruin the disliked man. William of Nogaret whose parents may have been burned as heretics is an example of this for he was excommunicated and eventually captured Boniface VIII. He may have been an enemy before he was ever pope. His disposition was more unpleasant than that of Boniface VIII. Before Boniface VIII had written the final document, Nogaret had gotten permission from Philip to act from the royal powers. In March of 1303, at a council they had already declared Boniface VIII, a heretic who had entered through the fold of evil.

Boniface VIII burial was shortened by a thunderstorm that raged during his funeral, perhaps symbolic of his time as pope or what still lay ahead of him. His trial of 8 years by Philip IV, the wrongs he was charged with, the disgrace of his last days were nothing compared to the lasting impacts that his end had on the papacy. Philip IV had won in every possible way even continuing after his death, to rub into the papacy that it is over. No longer will the papacy ever have the power they once had.

As stated previously, the movement in opposition to the pope had already been underway before he wrote the *Unam Sanctam*, which draws the question what was the catalyst document. I feel it was set in motion by the *Clericis laicos* and past the point of no return by *Auscultate filii*. It seems that enemies made while pope were indeed enough to inquire a response. It was not Boniface or Philip for this transaction was inevitable with the development of common education. As pivotal a document as suggested by historians the *Unam sanctum* was more unique than influential and focused on the church more than politics. The responses of these political leaders are all interconnected creating

a drama of politics far more complicated than a document that was not as radical as others.

I realize that history is easier related by focusing on major documents and individual figures, giving more importance to them than may be deserved to show the general time period. Other wise it would take a life time of dedication to understand certain periods of history and would thus lose any benefits that their studies produce. By looking at this document we can say with ease that his capture and torture were very clearly related to the Secular vs. Spiritual battle that has been on the line since the beginning. This clarification is a simple way of teaching these events without both with the pointless details that all said and done are meaningless because understanding them gives us nothing.



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